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HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

IN CHARGE OF
ALICE SHEPARD GILMAN, R.N.

STUDENT GOVERNMENT
BY JEAN I. GUNN, R.N.

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In the student government as it is worked out in our school, I think the nurses have—I do not want to say a higher sense of honor, because I do not know that they have—but I might say a more active sense of honor than they had before. In the days before we had student government the students, if they came in a little late and the training school office did not know about it, did not feel in honor bound to come and tell me personally that they were ten minutes late coming in, and I do not think they really thought that was dishonorable. They did not give it very much thought. Now every one knows that if she comes in late, she has to report to her proctor, and so on, and it makes them think about those little things very much more than they ever thought before.

It has also, undoubtedly, developed their initiative, and that is one of the things we need to develop in our training of nurses. Any training that turns out nurses all alike is not training as we would wish it to be.

It has also developed their executive ability; it has given them more poise, more self-confidence. It has developed a very much better understanding between the students and the graduate nurses on the staff. I think the graduate nurse is beginning to look on the pupil nurse as a student, and that is a great asset.

It also encourages free discussion of all difficulties in training school life, in their student days. If we want to get near our students, I really think we have to know their difficulties and we have to have them feel that we sympathize with them. To us their difficulties may seem very small, very trivial, but if we will look back at our student days, we will realize that to us they were real difficulties and real problems.

I can say with the greatest confidence that it has developed much better discipline in the school than we ever had before, and I think that is due to what I said a few moments ago, that the students feel the responsibility to their fellow students far more than they feel it to the training school office and the officers of the school.

Another thing that it has done for the students is to give them a distinct training in parliamentary procedure. They conduct their meetings in a very parliamentary way. It also makes them feel that they are a part of the association, and they enter into the discussion very much more freely than one would think. This is developing more and more as we go along. We find that discussion in their general meetings is really very general, and that is one thing that we need to develop in our graduate nurses' associations. In a convention such as this, one outstanding feature is that so few nurses enter into the discussion.

The Social Committee has been a very great asset to the residence life of the pupils. The old saying that everybody's business is nobody's business applies to this. In a school where you have not a Social Committee, or where there is no one personally responsible for fostering the social life, very little is done, because everybody waits for somebody else to do it. Where there is a social committee, it is its responsibility to organize social functions for the nurses. I do not mean formal receptions and that sort of thing, although they have them, but simple musicales and things that they may easily have in their residence life. We have had also more recreation among the pupils. I think they have played tennis more since we have had a social committee than ever before, because the Social Committee in the spring organized a tennis club, and there is just a little spur behind the nurses to make use of the tennis courts.

It has also been the instrument, if I may use that word, of developing our library, because in getting very much interested in home life, the nurses have more and more felt the need of a library. We had this year a donation given us for that purpose. In the old days, although the superintendent of nurses or some member of the graduate staff would have enjoyed compiling the list of books for that library, it was now all done by the students, and anything the students have to do, they take much more interest in. They then know that those books are in the library and that they have asked for them, and it stimulates their interest very greatly.

I may say in passing that a student of our school attended the Student Volunteer convention and as a result, we have organized recently the Y. W. C. A. work in the school. That has all been done by the students, assisted by the officials of the Y. W. C. A. in the city. The student body, as a whole, asked to have something more in their student life than they were having. They felt that they needed something of a religious nature in their student days. For that reason, first of all, they started a simple song service on Sunday evening for the nurses who were on in the late afternoon hours, but it has

developed now into the Y. W. C. A. sending in leaders for study groups which meet once a week.

If any of you are thinking of developing student government, there are a great many things that will discourage you, and I think one reason student government has not succeeded in some schools is because the students have not been given full authority. If you give student government with a string on it, I think it is impossible to make a success of it. The students lose interest, they feel that they are allowed to settle things that do not matter, but when it comes to some important decision it is taken over by the officials of the hospital. I think one of the things that is hardest to do is to give the council full authority in the residence life, because every superintendent of nurses feels that she can settle the difficulty much better than the Student Council can, and there is a tendency on the part of the superintendent to unconsciously exercise the authority that she always exercised in the past. If that is done, the plan is doomed to failure from the beginning.

In educating the graduate nurses on the staff, the superintendent of nurses should not fail to educate herself, and I may say that is one of the hardest things that she has to do. She has to get an entirely different viewpoint of the students' life, and it is not easy after a superintendent has controlled a school for years, to suddenly change her ideas. But you have to start with an open mind on the part of the superintendent of nurses or the student government is not likely to succeed.

If student government is organized in any school, if the superintendent of nurses has an open mind and gives the students full control of their residence life, full control of any question that may arise, and if the active coöperation of the graduate nurses is secured, I feel sure that the plan for student government will prove successful. I feel very strongly that if we trust our students they will not fail us.

The *Bulletin* of St. Luke's Hospital Alumnae, New York City, in its October number, pays tribute to the memory of Sophia F. Palmer: "Miss Palmer is not dead—she lives in a work well founded, in council wisely given and in the example of womanhood that we proudly and reverently remember. * * * and the *Bulletin* wishes to add its tribute to a noble woman."